PITTA

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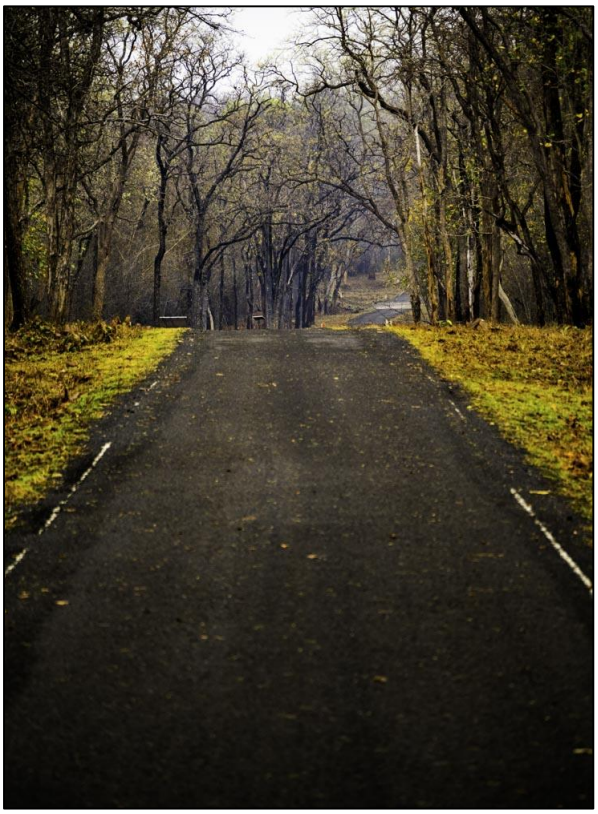
Trip Report: Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, March 30-31, 2024

Report and Photos: Gurukumar KR



A view of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve

Travel:
We embarked on our journey to the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve by the Dakshin Express, travelling between Hyderabad and Chandrapur. The train's convenient schedule, with a late departure and early arrival, made our travel seamless and efficient.

Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve:
Established in 1955, the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve is located in the state of Maharashtra, India. Covering an extensive area of approximately 625 sq km, the reserve is renowned for its lush forests, diverse wildlife, and thriving tiger population. Named after the Tadoba Lake and the Andhari River that flow through it, the reserve is a vital habitat for numerous species of flora and fauna, making it a popular destination for wildlife enthusiasts and nature lovers alike.

Boating Trip:
Before checking into the hotel on Day One, we enjoyed a serene boating trip in the Agarzari Zone. The lake, formed by an upstream dam, provided a picturesque backwater setting for our early morning excursion. As we glided through the calm waters, we were treated to a delightful array of bird sightings.

Among the species we encountered were Rose-ringed Parakeets flitting among the trees, Common Kingfishers diving gracefully for their morning catch, Pied Kingfishers hovering above the water's surface, and White-throated Kingfishers perched on overhanging branches.

Rose-ringed Parakeet

Cotton Pygmy-goose

Lesser Whistling-duck

Red-naped Ibis

We also observed the elegant Cotton Pygmy-goose, Lesser Whistling-duck and Spot-billed Ducks paddling through the shallows, while Red-naped, Glossy and Black-headed Ibises adorned the shoreline.

Glossy Ibis

Median Egret & Black-headed Ibis

The sight of majestic storks, including the Open-bill, Painted Stork and Lesser Adjutant, added to the spectacle. Herons, egrets, jacanas, and terns also made appearances, showcasing the rich avian diversity of the reserve.

Striated Heron

Safaris:
Over the course of our two-day visit, we were fortunate to embark on three safaris, each offering a unique perspective of the reserve's diverse wildlife.

Day One – Junona Buffer Zone Noon Safari:
Our adventure began with a noon safari in the Junona Buffer Zone. Departing at 10:30AM and concluding at 2:30PM, we explored this area and encountered a variety of flora and fauna under the midday sun. After driving around the reserve for hours, when it was almost time to end the safari, excitement peaked as we finally spotted a majestic Bengal Tiger near a watering hole. It was a female, gracefully crossing the water and disappearing into the tall grass on the other side. Our forest guide, most masterfully, positioned our Gypsy in a way that gave us a splendid view of the tigress lying low in the grass, cooling herself from the scorching heat. The sight of this magnificent creature in its natural habitat was truly awe-inspiring and left an indelible mark on our safari experience.

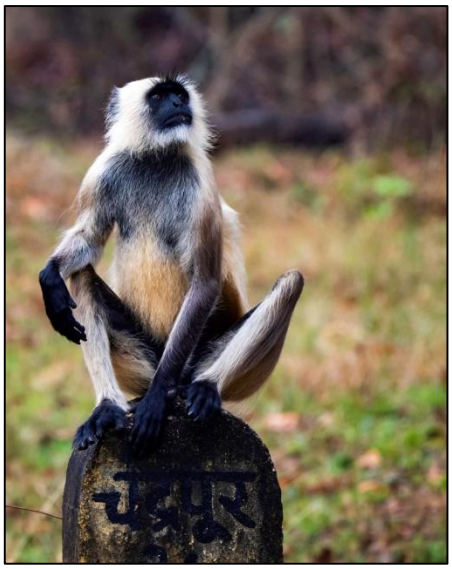
Mottled Wood Owl

Savanna Nightjar

Indian Peafowl

Other highlights of this safari included a Mottled Wood Owl perfectly camouflaged in the boughs of a tall tree, a Savanna Nightjar blending seamlessly with the leaf litter, and the vibrant calls of various bird species such as the Indian Peafowl, Common Iora, Golden Oriole, 3 types of babblers, and many others.

Day Two – Moharli Core Zone Early Morning Safari:
As the sun began to rise on the second day, we eagerly embarked on an early morning safari into the core Moharli zone. The morning was heavily overcast due to the rains from the previous evening, casting a mystical ambience over the forest. Despite the cloudy skies, the forest was alive with the calls of various bird species. The haunting cries of the Peacock echoed through the trees, while the melodious songs of the Ioras, Orioles, Babblers, and myriad other birds filled the air. Each call added to the symphony of nature, creating a mesmerizing atmosphere that enveloped us as we journeyed deeper into the wilderness. Amidst the tranquil surroundings, Grey Langurs swung gracefully through the trees, their agile movements a testament to their mastery of the forest canopy.



Grey Langur

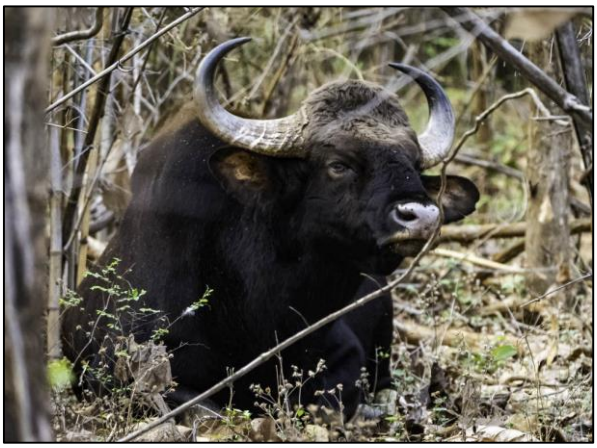
As we traversed the winding paths, we kept our eyes peeled for signs of wildlife, hoping to catch a glimpse of the elusive Sloth Bear as also more of the tigers that roam these woods. However, the rains seemed to have had an effect on the sightings, as both bear and tiger remained elusive, hidden away in the dense undergrowth.

Spotted Deer

Sambar

Despite this, our safari was not without its highlights. We were delighted to encounter herds of Indian Gaur, Spotted Deer, and Sambar, peacefully foraging in the lush vegetation. Their presence added to the sense of tranquillity and harmony that permeated the forest. Additionally, we were treated to a sighting of the elegant Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, with its glossy black plumage and distinctive long tail, adding to the enchanting atmosphere of our safari.

Day Two – Zaripeth Zone Late Afternoon Safari:
Our final safari of the trip took us to the Zaripeth Zone in the late afternoon. Despite the scorching heat, anticipation was high as we ventured into this buffer area known for its thriving tiger population. Our safari provided us with a diverse array of wildlife encounters.



Indian Bison (aka Gaur)

Wild Boar

Laughing Dove

We spotted an impressive Indian Bison (aka Gaur) and a large male Nilgai or Blue Bull, along with various deer species, including Spotted Deer and Sambar. The avian diversity was equally captivating, with sightings of Spotted and Laughing Doves, Black Drongos, and other birds enriching our safari experience.

Bengal Tiger

The highlight of the safari was an unforgettable tiger sighting. Initially hidden among the dense bamboo and tree shadows, it took the expertise of our forest guide to locate the resting tiger. Patiently waiting for almost an hour, we were rewarded as the tiger stirred from its slumber.

The safari experience was not without its challenges, however, highlighting the need for responsible tourism practices. Not all tourists had the patience required. Some impatient individuals resorted to hooting and disrupting the tranquillity of the forest, while others opted to leave prematurely. The forest guides had to constantly remind tourists to behave respectfully towards the environment and its inhabitants.

The Zaripeth Zone late afternoon safari provided us with an exhilarating finale to our Tadoba adventure. Witnessing the tiger's serene passage through the wilderness served as a poignant reminder of the importance of conservation efforts to protect these magnificent creatures and their habitat. However, the challenges posed by irresponsible tourist behaviour also served as a sobering reminder of the need for ongoing education and advocacy in the realm of ecotourism. Overall, the experience left us in awe of nature's beauty and the raw power of the animal kingdom, making it a journey we will cherish forever.

Reflections on Responsible Tourism:
Irresponsible behaviour of tourists underscores one of the perils of ecotourism. While the allure of encountering wildlife in their natural habitat is undeniable, it is imperative that visitors are educated and mindful of their impact on the ecosystem. Responsible tourism practices, including maintaining silence and respecting wildlife habitats, are essential to minimize disturbance and ensure the well-being of the animals. Education initiatives are crucial to instil an understanding of the importance of conservation efforts and to foster a culture of respect towards nature.

Common Hawk Cuckoo

The full list of birds seen during the trip:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	Common Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*	25	Indian Pond Heron	*Ardeola grayii*
2	Pied Kingfisher	*Ceryle rudis*	26	Bronze-winged Jacana	*Metopidius indicus*
3	White-throated Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*	27	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	*Hydrophasianus chirurgus*
4	Cotton Pygmy-goose	*Nettapus coromandelianus*	28	Black Bittern	*Ixobrychus flavicollis*
5	Lesser Whistling-duck	*Dendrocygna javanica*	29	White-breasted Waterhen	*Amaurornis phoenicurus*
6	Spot-billed Duck	*Anas poecilorhyncha*	30	River Tern	*Sterna aurantia*
7	Red-naped Ibis	*Pseudibis papillosa*	31	Barn Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*
8	Glossy Ibis	*Plegadis falcinellus*	32	Small Pratincole	*Glareola lactea*
9	Black-headed Ibis	*Threskiornis melanocephalus*	33	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*
10	Asian Openbill	*Anastomus oscitans*	34	Indian Silverbill	*Euodice malabarica*
11	Painted Stork	*Mycteria leucocephala*	35	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*
12	Lesser Adjutant	*Leptoptilos javanicus*	36	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*
13	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*	37	Asian Pied Starling	*Gracupica contra*
14	Great Egret	*Ardea alba*	38	Paddyfield Pipit	*Anthus rufulus*
15	Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*	39	Indian Bushlark	*Mirafra erythroptera*
16	Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*	40	Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	*Dicrurus poradiscus*
17	Striated Heron	*Butorides striatus*	41	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*
18	Purple Heron	*Ardea purpurea*	42	Oriental Honey-buzzard	*Pernis ptilorhynchus*
19	Grey-headed Swamphen	*Porphyrio poliocephalus*	43	White-eyed Buzzard	*Butastur teesa*
20	Common Coot	*Fulica atra*	44	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*
21	Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*	45	Mottled Wood Owl	*Strix ocellata*
22	Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*	46	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*
23	Brahminy Starling	*Sturnia pagodarum*	47	Indian Roller	*Coracias benghalensis*
24	Long-tailed Shrike	*Lanius schach*	48	Pied Bushchat	*Saxicola caprata*

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
49	Indian Robin	*Saxicoloides fulicatus*	61	Black-hooded Oriole	*Oriolus xanthornus*
50	Oriental Magpie Robin	*Copsychus saularis*	62	Indian Peafowl	*Pavo cristatus*
51	Common Hawk Cuckoo	*Hierococcyx varius*	63	Red Spurfowl	*Galloperdix spadicea*
52	Shikra	*Accipiter badius*	64	Grey Junglefowl	*Gallus sonneratii*
53	Rufous Treepie	*Dendrocitta vagabunda*	65	Savanna Nightjar	*Caprimulgus affinis*
54	Spotted Dove	*Streptopelia chinensis*	66	Jungle Babbler	*Turdoides striata*
55	Blue Rock Pigeon	*Columba livia*	67	Yellow-billed Babbler	*Turdoides affinis*
56	Laughing Dove	*Streptopelia senegalensis*	68	Large Grey Babbler	*Turdoides malcolmi*
57	Yellow-footed Green Pigeon	*Treron phoenicopterus*	69	Darter	*Anhinga melanogaster*
58	Indian Grey Hornbill	*Ocyceros birostris*	70	Yellow Wagtail	*Motacilla flava*
59	Common Iora	*Aegithina tiphia*	71	Median Egret	*Mesophoyx intermedia*
60	Indian Golden Oriole	*Oriolus kundoo*			

Some other photos taken during the trip:

Pied Kingfisher

Common Myna

Indian Robin male

Red-wattled Lapwing

Darter

Grey-headed Swamphen

Yellow Wagtail

Indian Roller

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Trip Report: Kistareddypet Lake, March 3, 2024

Report: Neil Rahul Gala; Photos: Mohd Adnan Uddin

Flock of Garganey at Kistareddypet Lake

Kistareddypet Lake, set amidst a picturesque backdrop in Telangana, is a lake area which remarkably portrays its natural and ecological features. Being people fond of outdoor activities and adventure, especially going close to nature, the group chose this picturesque place. Despite the fact that not many people are likely to have heard of the lake, it is of considerable environmental and ecological value, which makes it a preferred site for nature enthusiasts and bird fanciers such as ourselves.

The single most distinguishing facet of the lake lies in the fact that it supports many types of bird life. Kistareddypet Lake is a very good place for bird watching as both resident and migratory birds can be found around the lake.

When we visited, there was lush vegetation around the lake and the water was so calm that you could see the mirror kind of reflection. The spirit of tranquillity right from the start of the exploration created a serene environment for the day, and our excursion proved to be a captivating journey into the heart of avian diversity.

Common Sandpiper (L) and Wood Sandpiper (R)

Barn Swallow

From the delicate wading of sandpipers to the graceful flight of swallows, each species showcased its unique adaptations and behaviours, enriching our appreciation for the natural wonders that abound in this serene habitat.

Of all the bird species seen, gracefully floating in the shallow waters, elegant Greater Flamingos stood out as a sight to behold because of their pink feathers. The Pratincoles flew low, low across the lake, their streamlined bodies soaring like swift falcons as they skimmed the waters seeking food – and when they landed, they would almost completely disappear into the hoof marks left by cattle in the wet mud. Various types of waterfowl leisurely floated on the water, while cormorants and pelicans impressively dipped towards the water to hunt fish.

Small Pratincole

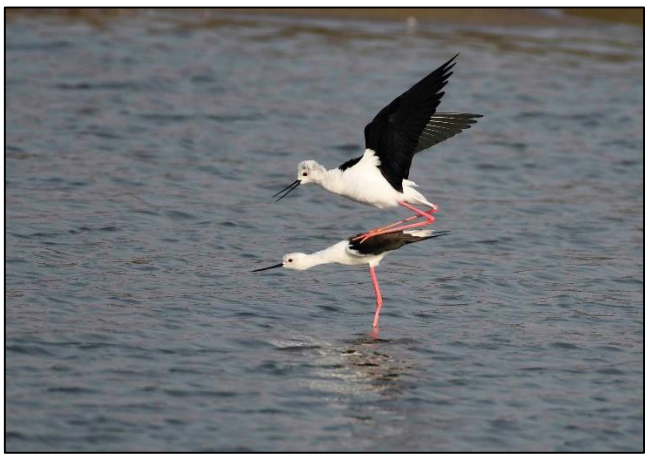
Marsh Sandpiper

Marsh, Common and Wood Sandpipers displayed their adeptness at hunting as they tirelessly scoured the shoreline for small invertebrates.

A confrontation between two Little Stints

Kentish Plover

The lake hosts a good number of Little Stints, which displayed remarkable agility while feeding on aquatic invertebrates. The lake is also a good habitat for Little Ringed and Kentish Plovers. We saw many of these charming birds moving around the banks of the lake with cautious steps and watchful eyes.



Black-winged Stilt mating

Watching the Black-winged Stilts at lake made me really happy. There were over two hundred Stilts in the lake. Seeing a pair mate was a special moment.

Great Egret

The Great Egret stood tall and elegant, with its snowy-white feathers shining in the sunlight. Nearby, the Eurasian Spoonbill waded gracefully through the shallow waters. Its distinctive spoon-shaped bill is a unique adaptation for feeding.

Eurasian Spoonbill and Little Egret

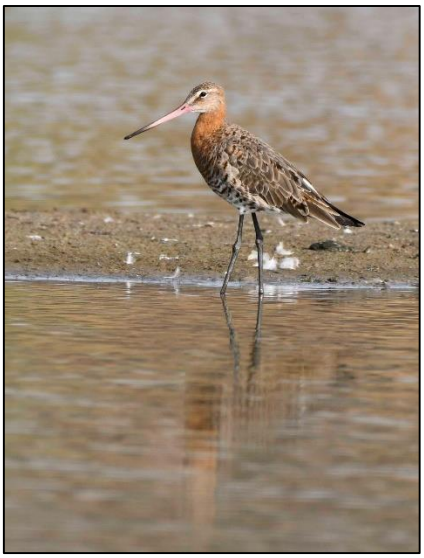
The Great Cormorant impressed us with its sleek black plumage and skilled diving abilities, disappearing beneath the surface in search of prey.

Little Grebe

Amongst them all, the Little Grebe paddled quietly, its small size and bobbing movements adding a touch of charm to the serene scene. Each bird brought its own special qualities to the lake, reminding us of the rich diversity of life thriving in this beautiful habitat.

Garganey

We were also lucky to spot some other migratory birds like Garganey, Northern Shoveler and Black-tailed Godwit. These birds travel long distances every year to find food and warmer places to live. Seeing them was really exciting. It made me think about how amazing nature is and how these birds travel so far just to survive.



Black-tailed Godwit in breeding plumage

The place becomes more lively and teeming with life especially during the peak migration season of the birds; one example of this was the number of Yellow, Grey and White Wagtails we saw all around.

White Wagtail

Grey Wagtail

Yellow Wagtail

The climate of this region is friendly to birds and many of them migrate thousands of kilometres to find a home in this area. This shows that the lake is equally important in promoting the continued well-being of bird species all over the world since it provides shelter to these birds as they take their migratory rests as well as have food for recovery and rejuvenation.

It is not only birds that can thrive on its ecosystem: the lake suggests a home to numerous other forms of wildlife, due to an availability of water plants as well as fish in large numbers, thus enhancing the balance of the aquatic ecosystem. Vegetation, especially trees, shrubs, and reeds, augment the habitat – with birds, for instance, using the vegetation for nesting and hiding from predators.

But due to the rising dominance of humans and development of urban facilities, Kistareddypet Lake has several issues. Pollution, encroachment and loss of its natural habitats pose a real threat to the species. An attempt must be made to work together and protect this natural asset. It will require partnership between the local water authorities, environmental groups and the people for proper implementation of proper measures such as better control and enforcement of fishing methods, reduction of pollution sources and increasing public awareness for the conservation causes.

Research carried out by our group revealed that Kistareddypet Lake can serve as an important hotspot for the conservation of birds as well as other biodiverse fauna in Telangana. People living nearby have to recognize the fact that in order for Kistareddypet Lake to be preserved, people have to contribute to its conservation as well as implement sustainable policies. In this way, beauty and biological richness can be preserved for future generations as an outstanding environmental asset.

Discussing and musing on these aspects, we bid farewell to the tranquil shores of Kishtareddypet Lake, carrying with us cherished memories of our encounter with its feathered inhabitants, and eagerly anticipating our next foray into the enchanting world of birdwatching.

The group during the trip

The full list of birds seen during the period:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	Knob-billed Duck	*Sarkidiornis melanotos*	6	Grey Francolin	*Ortygornis pondicerianus*
2	Garganey	*Spatula querquedula*	7	Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*
3	Northern Shoveler	*Spatula clypeata*	8	Rock Pigeon	*Columba livia*
4	Indian Spot-billed Duck	*Anas poecilorhyncha*	9	Laughing Dove	*Spilopelia senegalensis*
5	Indian Peafowl	*Pavo cristatus*	10	Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
11	Little Ringed Plover	*Charadrius dubius*	32	Great Egret	*Ardea alba*
12	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	33	Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*
13	Kentish Plover	*Anarhynchus alexandrinus*	34	Glossy Ibis	*Plegadis falcinellus*
14	Black-tailed Godwit	*Limosa limosa*	35	Black-headed Ibis	*Threskiornis melanocephalus*
15	Common Sandpiper	*Actitis hypoleucos*	36	Eurasian Spoonbill	*Platalea leucorodia*
16	Green Sandpiper	*Tringa ochropus*	37	Shikra	*Accipiter badius*
17	Marsh Sandpiper	*Tringa stagnatilis*	38	White-throated Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*
18	Wood Sandpiper	*Tringa glareola*	39	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*
19	Ruff	*Calidris pugnax*	40	Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark	*Eremopterix griseus*
20	Temminck's Stint	*Calidris temminckii*	41	Barn Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*
21	Little Stint	*Calidris minuta*	42	Streak-throated Swallow	*Petrochelidon fluvicola*
22	Small Pratincole	*Glareola lactea*	43	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*
23	Oriental Pratincole	*Glareola maldivarum*	44	Rosy Starling	*Pastor roseus*
24	Whiskered Tern	*Chlidonias hybrida*	45	Indian Robin	*Copsychus fulicatus*
25	River Tern	*Sterna aurantia*	46	Purple Sunbird	*Cinnyris asiaticus*
26	Painted Stork	*Mycteria leucocephala*	47	Grey Wagtail	*Motacilla cinerea*
27	Little Cormorant	*Microcarbo niger*	48	Western Yellow Wagtail	*Motacilla flava*
28	Great Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*	49	White-browed Wagtail	*Motacilla maderaspatensis*
29	Indian Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*	50	White Wagtail	*Motacilla alba*
30	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*	51	Paddyfield Pipit	*Anthus rufulus*
31	Eastern Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus coromandus*			

Some other photos taken during this period:

Black-winged Stilt

Common Sandpiper

Garganey

Great Egret

Little Cormorant

Wood Sandpiper

Little Stint

White Wagtail

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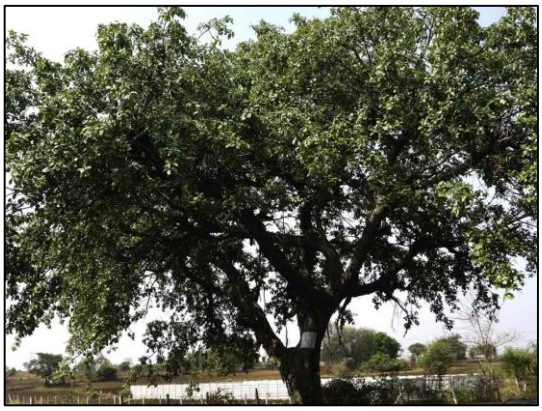
Report: Chevella Banyans Bird Survey, April 13-14, 2024

Report: Dhiraj & Vijaya Kaveri; Photos: Vijaya Kaveri

Banyan trees along NH163

The 'Save Chevella Banyans' campaign is an attempt to protect thousands of gorgeous trees – especially old and mature banyans – marked to be axed for road widening on the Hyderabad-Chevella-Bijapur highway NH 163 in Telangana, India.

The campaign is run by a group of passionate citizens called Nature Lovers of Hyderabad (NLH), and is focused on saving some 900+ banyan trees, which are almost 150 years old, from being cut by NHAI. The National Green Tribunal has stayed the NHAI project at the moment and asked NHAI to come up with an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) before cutting the banyans.



The majestic banyans of Chevella – a living heritage for people of the region

NLH has meticulously geo-tagged all the banyan trees along the highway. The group also wanted to document the avifauna in the area, which gave rise to this survey. The 2-day survey was conducted on April 13-14, 2024, and was a perfect citizen science project for us.

The whole route was divided into 25 cells and each team got 2 to 3 cells to survey. Our team, consisting of Omar Ali Khan, Vijaya & myself, was allotted cells 15 and 16. We started surveying cell no. 15 at 6:30AM. The weather was a bit cloudy and we didn't see much bird activity except for Indian Peafowl, Red-vented Bulbul, Purple Sunbird, Asian Koel and Southern Coucal. This cell had few fruiting trees so we didn't see many birds.

Red-vented Bulbul

By the time we started surveying the 2nd cell, there was good sunlight and we could document some good birds. Just one banyan tree yielded the majority of the birds of the day.

Indian Peafowl

Tickell's Blue Flycatcher

Yellow-footed Green Pigeon

This fruiting banyan was feeding Coppersmith Barbets, Red-vented Bulbuls, Indian Golden Oriole, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Small Minivet, Yellow-footed Green Pigeon and our favourite, the Indian Grey Hornbill. And even with the bright and mighty sun and scorching heat, under the banyan it was very cool and we didn't feel the heat at all. We wondered that if just one banyan can do this, we can only imagine what would be the negative effect with all these banyans gone.

Indian Grey Hornbill

Indian Robin

The single-lane road was busy with vehicles moving at high speed, which obviously demands expansion of the road, but a highway devoid of these majestic banyans, which give shade, shelter and food to so many birds, is not a good bargain in the long run. It is inflicting cruelty on ourselves and these innocent birds.

Common Woodshrike

Green Bee-eater

Our team

As for us, volunteering for this cause gives us an opportunity to be part of the larger cause of environment conservation. It was a perfect win-win situation and, in future too, we would love to connect, collaborate and contribute to such campaigns and initiatives as nature lovers.

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Bird of the Month

Text and Photos: Umesh Mani

Blue Whistling Thrush (*Myophonus caeruleus*)

Blue Whistling Thrush (Manila, Uttarakhand, May 10, 2024)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Muscicapidae
Genus: *Myophonus*
Species: *M. caeruleus*
Size: 33 cm

Description & distribution: The Blue Whistling Thrush is not a true thrush; it is, rather, a member of the Muscicapidae family of Old World flycatchers. It is widely distributed, ranging across Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Laos, Macau, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tibet, Turkmenistan, Pakistan and Vietnam. In the Himalayas, it makes altitudinal movements, descending to lower altitudes in the winter.

Based on clear variations in size and plumage between some of the populations, six sub-species are recognized: The nominate *M. c. caeruleus*, with a black bill, in central and eastern China; *M. c. temminckii*, with a bill that is narrower at the base, in the Himalayas and other mountains of central Asia, west China and north-eastern Myanmar; *M. c. eugenei*, lacking the white spots on median coverts, in central Myanmar, east Thailand, south China, and north and central Indochina; *M. c. crassirostris* in south-east Thailand, Cambodia, and north and central Malay Peninsula; *M. c. dichrorhynchus*, with smaller spangles, in south Malay Peninsula and Sumatra; and *M. c. flavirostris*, with the thickest bills, in Java.

The Blue Whistling Thrush is an easy bird to recognize. The adult is dark violet blue, looking almost black when in the shaded forest areas, and the head and body are spangled with glistening silvery-blue. Forehead, shoulders and fringes to wing and tail are slightly brighter blue. The median coverts have white spots at their tips. The bill is yellow and stands out in contrast to the rest of the bird. The sexes are similar. The juvenile is browner and lacks the blue spangling; its wings and tail are also a duller blue than the adult.

Habitat & behaviour: The Blue Whistling Thrush is usually seen singly or in pairs, in temperate forests, subtropical or tropical moist montane forests, ravines, and wooded areas, close to streams. It is a restless bird, rarely seen sitting at one place for long. It hops onto rocks, jumps to the ground, turns over leaf litter or small stones while looking for prey, and moves around in short spurts. It spreads and droops its tail when alarmed. It is active well after dusk. Its diet consists primarily of fruits, earthworms, insects, crabs and snails, the latter typically being battered on a rock before they are eaten. It is most well-known for its musical, rambling whistling song, which is a very familiar sound in the early mornings in the hills. Its alarm call is a shrill *kree*.

Nesting: The Blue Whistling Thrush breeds between April and August, and the nest is a cup of moss and roots placed in a ledge or hollow beside a stream. The usual clutch consists of 3-4 eggs, and the pair may sometimes raise a second brood.

Local name: The Blue Whistling Thrush is known as *'Pahari neeli kasturi'* in Punjab, *'Kuljel'* or *'Kaljit'* in Uttar Pradesh, and *'Kasturaa'* in Himachal Pradesh and Kashmir; another beautifully evocative name used in Kashmir is *'Hazaar dastaan'*.

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For information, write to: Deccan Birders, PO Box 45, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500034. **Website:** www.deccanbirders.org. **E-group:** http://groups.google.co.in/group/deccanbirders. **Society membership** (in Rs.): Annual: 500 per annum; Student: 200 per annum; Corporate: 2000 per annum; Life: 3000. (*Add Rs 75 for outstation cheques.)*